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Final Technical Report

to

National Aeronautics

and

Space Administration

Title: AGES OF EXTRAGALACTIC INTERMEDIATE-AGE STAR CLUSTERS

Project Director: Phillip J. Flower

SS#: [REDACTED]

Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy

Mailing Address: Department of Physics and Astronomy  
117 Kinard Laboratory of Physics  
Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina 29631

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Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina 29631

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## Research Summary:

The main emphasis of my research proposal, NAGW-441, was the development of a cluster dating technique for faint, distant star clusters observable in the Local Group of galaxies with the Space Telescope. This dating technique relied on the variation with age in the luminosity of cluster giants; they, like the brightest cluster main sequence stars, become fainter with increasing cluster age (see Flower 1984, Ap.J., 278:582). For very distant clusters to be observed with the Space Telescope, only the red giants, and perhaps the very brightest main sequence stars in metal rich clusters, will be observable. [For moderately metal poor clusters, the faintest cluster red giants are brighter than the brightest cluster main sequence stars (Flower 1984 B.A.A.S., 15, 912).] Hence, for distant extragalactic clusters, like those in M31, for instance, the only available way to accurately date the metal poor clusters will be through the cluster red giants.

My dating technique is described and applied to Magellanic Cloud star clusters in Flower (1984 Ap.J. 278:582). The published color-magnitude diagrams of intermediate-age Magellanic Cloud star clusters generally exhibit all of the cluster red giants plus the brightest main sequence stars. For the metal poor clusters, the brightest main sequence stars are at magnitude levels where observational uncertainty and scatter dominate. I have dated in the above paper six clusters and in Flower (1984 IAU Symp. No. 108, pg 31; 1984 IAU Symp. No. 105, pg 79) one other cluster, NGC 1978. Although the quality of current photographic cluster color-magnitude diagrams for Magellanic Cloud clusters is perhaps what we can expect in the future with Space Telescope color-magnitude diagrams of star clusters in the most distant galaxies, soon very deep earth-based CCD color-magnitude diagrams of Magellanic Cloud clusters will become available. Because I will be able to use the entire upper end of the main sequence as well as the faintest cluster red giants for cluster dating, these data will provide a very important calibration for my dating technique.

The models that I have computed for dating intermediate-age clusters range from  $3.25 M_{\odot}$  to  $\sim 2 M_{\odot}$ . At  $\sim 2 M_{\odot}$  the models become degenerate and I did not compute models beyond core-helium ignition below this mass. Thus I am able to date clusters younger than  $\sim 10^9$  years. To date older clusters, either in distant galaxies using the faintest red giants or in nearby galaxies using both main sequence stars and red giants, core-helium burning phases for masses  $< 2 M_{\odot}$  must be generated.

A very interesting recent development in Magellanic Cloud research is the suggestion that the Magellanic Clouds are closer than previously thought. If so, this would increase current cluster age estimates due to the reduction in the assumed intrinsic luminosities of the member stars. Most of the intermediate-age Magellanic Cloud star clusters that have been dated using their color-magnitude diagram morphology have ages  $\leq 10^9$  yr; this is also the age limit for evolved  $2 M_{\odot}$  models. A new distance scale would necessarily increase derived cluster ages to over  $10^9$  yr - out of range of the present grids of models.

I have stressed cluster dating using as much of the color-magnitude diagram morphology as possible because there appears to be a fundamental uncertainty in the mapping of assumed model metallicity,  $Z$ , and observed metallicity,  $[Fe/H]$ . Currently, it is difficult to obtain satisfactory synthetic color-magnitude diagrams (generated from the evolutionary tracks) based on a one-to-one correspondence between  $Z$  and  $[Fe/H]$ . In general, the observed  $[Fe/H]$  is much lower than the value of  $Z$  necessary to reproduce the observed cluster color-magnitude diagram morphologies.

One possible solution to this mapping problem may lie with stellar opacities (Carney, Janes, and Flower 1984, Ap.J., submitted). It is not clear yet exactly what changes are needed; for low mass models, comparisons with observed color-magnitude diagrams suggest increases in the envelope opacities, while for high mass models, comparisons indicate opacity decreases above  $10^7$  K are needed. Another solution may involve stellar mass loss. Some preliminary mass loss calculations being done at Clemson indicate that moderate amounts of mass loss may improve the comparisons between observed color-magnitude diagrams and the synthetic color-magnitude diagrams generated from grids of evolutionary tracks.

#### Publications:

1. The models computed and an application of the dating technique is given in "Ages of Intermediate-Age Magellanic Cloud Star Clusters", 1984, Ap.J. 278:582.
2. The above results plus the dating of one more cluster were reported at two international meetings: IAU Symposium No. 105, "Observational Tests of the Stellar Evolution Theory" page 79 (1984) and IAU Symposium No. 108, "Structure and Evolution of the Magellanic Clouds" page 31 (1984). Both are in press.
3. The abstract in the Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society 15:912 (1983) presents a qualitative relationship between cluster metallicity and color-magnitude diagram morphology.
4. The problem with the mapping of assumed model metallicity  $Z$  and observed metallicity  $[Fe/H]$  is discussed in "The Young SMC Cluster NGC 330 (1984 Ap.J., submitted).

The Young SMC Cluster NGC 330

Bruce W. Carney<sup>1</sup>

University of North Carolina

Kenneth A. Janes<sup>1</sup>

Boston University

and

Phillip J. Flower

Clemson University

(1) Visiting astronomer, Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory, which is operated by AURA, Inc., under contract with the National Science Foundation.

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# Abstract

We report the results obtained from deep photoelectric and photographic UVB photometry, low-resolution spectroscopy, and DDO and infrared photometry for stars in and around the young SMC cluster NCC 330. We also compare synthetic color-magnitude diagrams to that obtained for the cluster, finding it to have an age of  $12 \times 10^6$  years, whereas the young surrounding field population is about 50% older. Photometric metallicity indicators suggest the cluster is very metal-poor, but we discuss reasons why they may be misleading.